

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5998

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

USMTM DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

USCINCEUR

COMIDEASTFOR

S E C R E T SANA 1966

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, SA, YE

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER ON MEETINGS WITH TOP SAUDI LEADERSHIP

1. SUMMARY: ON JULY 20, FOREIGN MINISTER ABDULLAH AL-ASNAG EXPRESSED GREAT SATISFACTION OVER HIS RECENT MEETINGS WITH TOP SAUDI LEADERSHIP WHICH PLEDGED FULL SUPPORT FOR PRESIDENT HAMD'S REGIME. ASNAG ALSO STATED THAT SAUDI MILITARY NOW EXPECTS GHASHMI TO ARRIVE OR/OR SHORTLY AFTER AUGUST 3 AND WILL BE PREPARED TO WORK OUT DETAILS FOR EXPEDITIOUS IMPLEMENTATION OF SAUDI MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO YEMEN. MEANWHILE SAG AND YARG HAVE AGREED TO FORM JOINT COMMITTEE TO "COORDINATE" IN MILITARY, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL FIELDS. ASNAG SAID THAT SAG OFFICIALS ACCEPTED

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YARG EXPLANATION FOR DECISION TO GO TO USG FIRST

WITH REPORT OF SOVIET PRESSURES AND AGREED TO WORK CLOSELY WITH YARG TO DIMINISH SOVIET INFLUENCE IN PENINSULA. ASNAG CONCLUDED THAT YARG INTENDS TO DESIST PUSHING SAUDIS ANY FURTHER AT THE PRESENT TIME LEST SUCH PRESSURE BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE IN VIEW OF SAG'S OWN INTERNAL PROBLEMS. FOR MY PART, I CONVEYED TO ASNAG ACCOUNT OF AMBASSADOR AKIN'S RECENT SESSION WITH PRINCE SULTAN, WHICH ASNAG WAS ABLE TO PASS ON IMMEDIATELY TO PRES. HAMDI WHO UNEXPECTEDLY STOPPED BY FOREIGN MINISTRY WHILE OUR MEETING WAS IN PROGRESS. BOTH HAMDI AND ASNAG WERE PLEASED WITH ACCOUNT. NEXT MOVE IS NOW CLEARLY UP TO THE SAUDIS TO GIVE GHASHMI REASONABLY FORTHCOMING MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMITMENT. IN THIS REGARD, HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF THE OPEN-ENDED SOVIET OFFER, GHASHMI MAY WELL BE LOOKING FOR MORE MILITARY HARDWARE THAN WAS PREVIOUSLY ANTICIPATED BY SAG AND USG AND WE BOTH SHOULD BE PREPARED FOR THIS EVENTUALITY. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING JULY 20 MEETING WITH FONMIN ABDALLAH AL-ASNAG SKVARIOUS SUBJECTS DISCUSSED BEING REPORTED BY SEPTELS), HE BRIEFED ME ON HIS RECENT MEETINGS WITH TOP SAUDI LEADERSHIP DURING HIS JIDDA VISIT LAST WEEK TO ATTEND THE ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS CONFERENCE. ASNAG SAID THAT ALL WITH WHOM HE SPOKE INCLUDING PRINCES FAHD, SULTAN AND SAUD IBN FAYSAL ASSURED HIM OF SAG'S FULL SUPPORT FOR YEMENI GOVERNMENT UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF IBRAHIM AL-HAMDI. AL-ASNAG CONTINUED THAT DURING MEETING WITH FAHD, LATTER EMBARKED ON AN HOUR AND 40 MINUTES- MONOLOGUE IN WHICH HE SPELLED OUT SAUDI RATIONALE FOR FIRM SUPPORT OF HAMDI AS WELL AS REITERATED SAUDI COMMITMENT TO PROVIDE TANGIBLE EVIDENCE OF THEIR SUPPORT. ASNAG STATED THAT SAUDI LEADERSHIP WAS FULLY AWARE OF RECENT INCREASE IN SOVIET PRESSURES ON YARG AND OF NEED FOR SAG TO RESPOND EXPEDITIOUSLY TO YEMEN'S REQUEST FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE. ASNAG ADDED THAT SULTAN INFORMED HIM SAUDI MILITARY WILL BE PREPARED TO MEET GHASHMI ON SOME DAY OR DAY AFTER PRIME MINISTER ABD AL-GHANI'S VISIT TO RIYADH (NOW SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 3) IN ORDER TO WORK OUT QUICKLY DETAILS OF SAUDI MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

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3. ASNAG CONTINUED THAT IN DISCUSSING THE PROBLEM OF SOVIET PRESSURES ON YARG, ASNAG EXPLAINED TO SULTAN REASON WHY YARG HAD CHOSEN NOT TO INFORM SAG DIRECTLY OF THIS PRESSURE WAS TO AVOID CHARGES THAT YARG WAS TRYING TO "BLACKMAIL" SAG. ASNAG TOLD SULTAN THAT YARG DECIDED TO INFORM AMERICANS FIRST BECAUSE USG BETTER INFORMED ON SOVIET MACHINATIONS IN AREA AND THEREFORE

IN BETTER POSITION BOTH TO ASSESS THREAT, AND TO CONVEY THIS ASSESSMENT TO THE SAUDIS IF THEY SAW FIT. SULTAN AND FAHD ACCEPTED THIS EXPLANATION AND WAS PARTICULARLY EMPHATIC IN COMMITTING SAG TO CLOSE COOPERATION WITH YARG IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT THE DIMINUTION OF SOVIET INFLUENCE IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA.

4. ASNAG SAID THAT TO DEMONSTRATE FURTHER YEMENI GOOD INTENTIONS TOWARDS SAG, HE CONVEYED TO SULTAN EARLIER PROPOSAL MADE TO SAG FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF "CLOSE COORDINATION" BETWEEN TWO GOVERNMENTS IN MILITARY, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONS FIELDS. (SEE SANA 1487). SAG HAS ACCEPTED THIS PROPOSAL AND HAS AGREED TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT COMMITTEE HEADED BY THE SAUDI FOREIGN MINISTER AND THE YEMENI FOREIGN MINISTER TO IMPLEMENT THIS PROPOSAL. ASNAG CONTINUED THAT MEANWHILE YEMENI GOVERNMENT IS NOW IN PROCESS OF DRAWING UP VARIOUS AID REQUESTS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE SAUDI GOVERNMENT PRIOR TO PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT. THESE REQUESTS WILL BE CARRIED TO RIYADH IN A FEW DAYS BY PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR MOHAMMAD BASINDWA. ASNAG SAID THAT PURPOSE OF BASINDWA'S VISIT IS TO LAY GROUNDWORK FOR PRIME MINISTER SO THAT LATTER'S TRIP WILL BE MERELY TO SET SEAL OF SAUDI-YEMENI APPROVAL ON ALREADY AGREED UPON PROJECTS.

5. ASNAG CONCLUDED THAT IN VIEW OF THE POSITIVE ATTITUDE HE ENCOUNTERED IN RIYADH, HE BELIEVES YARG SHOULD NOW DESIST FROM PUSHING SAUDIS ANY FURTHER. RATHER HE BELIEVES YARG SHOULD GIVE THEM A CHANCE TO "DEMONSTRATE THEIR GOOD WILL". HE OBSERVED THAT SAUDIS ALSO HAVE INTERNAL PROBLEMS AND FURTHER YEMENI IMPORTUNING AT THIS TIME MIGHT BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE.

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6. FOR MY PART, I INFORMED ASNAG OF CONTENTS OF JIDDA 5040 FOR WHICH ASNAG EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION, AND SAID IT ONLY CONFIRMED HIS OWN IMPRESSIONS OF HIS JIDDA MEETINGS AND HIS SUBSEQUENT REPORT TO PRESIDENT HAMDI. (WHILE OUR MEETING WAS IN PROGRESS, HAMDI STOPPED BY ON AN OBVIOUSLY SURPRISE VISIT. FOLLOWING A FEW MINUTES OF PLEASANTRIES, HE LEFT, ESCORTED BY ASNAG. AFTER RETURNING TO ROOM, ASNAG TOLD ME THAT HE HAD JUST CONVEYED TO HAMDI GIST OF MY JIDDA REPORT AND THAT PRESIDENT WAS PLEASED).

7. COMMENT. ASNAG WAS OBVIOUSLY GRATIFIED AND HEARTENED BY HIS MEETING WITH THE SAUDIS. SEVERAL TIMES DURING OUR TALK, HE REPEATED THAT "EVERYTHING NOW SEEMS TO BE GOING WELL". THE NEXT MOVE IS CLEARLY UP TO THE SAUDIS. IF GHASHMI CAN COME BACK FROM RIYADH WITH A REASONABLY FORTHCOMING SAUDI

MILITARY ASSISTANCE COMMITMENT, HAMDI WILL DOUBTLESS HAVE WHAT HE NEEDS TO CONVINCE HIS DISSATISFIED FELLOW OFFICERS OF THE UTILITY OF THE SAUDI CONNECTION. IN THIS REGARD, WHILE THE PROPOSED "IMPACT PACKAGE" WILL CERTAINLY HELP, IN VIEW OF THE OPEN-ENDED SOVIET OFFER GHASHMI MAY WELL BE LOOKING FOR MORE THAN HE MIGHT HAVE EARLIER. THE SAUDIS AND WE MUST, THEREFORE, BE PREPARED FOR SUCH AN EVENTUALITY. MOREOVER, THE YEMENIS MAY WELL BE LOOKING FOR ITEMS BOTH WHICH COULD BE DELIVERED QUICKLY IN TIME FOR THE SEPT 26 NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS, AND ALSO WHICH COULD HAVE A POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT ON THE VIEWERS (CIVILIAN AND MILITARY) ON THAT IMPORTANT OCCASION. MEANWHILE, IT IS CERTAINLY A SIGN OF ASNAG'S POLITICAL ACUMEN AND PRAGMATISM THAT HE HAS REALIZED THE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVITY OF PUSHING THE SAUDIS ANY MORE AT THIS TIME.

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